
DEMIURGUS

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Verum • Bonum • Pulchrum

What is Demiurgus?

Demiurge (or Demiurgus to St. Augustine and the Latins) originally comes from the Platonic dialogue, *Timaeus*. In this dialogue, Plato describes the Demiurgus, the divine power which produced the harmony of the world out of the discord of chaos. The description of the Demiurgus and his work of fashioning given in this dialogue suggest both the possibility of some knowledge of God apart from special revelation and the limits of that knowledge. This obscured reflection is suggestive of the relation between human wisdom and the wisdom of God. Taken positively, however, the name signifies that passionate desire to create something good; or, to speak in terms of Plato's *Symposium*, that thirst to beget beauty which is the essential craving of every fallen creature for the brilliance from which he came and for which he clumsily strives.

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You are invited to respond to the articles contained herein either verbally or in writing. Letters to the editor may be given to an editor, fittingly. If you are interested in writing an article or helping out in other ways with future editions of the *Demiurgus*, talk to one of the editors or look for announcements on the bulletin board in the future.

Cover Illustration: *The Ancient of Days* by William Blake

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Reasons for a Demiurgus

The Editors

The title of this journal is taken from the *Timaeus*, a Platonic dialogue. In it, Timaeus gives "a story of a likeness" about the coming to be of both the whole cosmos and its parts. The cause of this coming to be is the Demiurge (Demiurgus, *in lingua latina*) who orders all things to conform to the perfect model of the universe insofar as they can receive this perfection. The role and figure of the Demiurgus is appropriately suggestive in several ways.

Firstly, it shows something of the wonder which all men are seized with when they examine the universe. Truly, the heavens declare the glory of God and the visible things of this world point to their invisible creator. We are naturally able to see through reason that there must be a maker, and even come to some idea as to the means by which this maker works. Yet this knowledge seems principally to reveal our ignorance of the one thing which is needful. The Word may be known, but not the Word Incarnate by which we are saved.

This lack of resemblance between the Demiurgus and the true Creator suggests something about the proper relationship between the liberal arts and theology. Having a zeal for knowledge, but not according to God, is a danger which can remain even at a Christian college. Unless the liberal arts are made handmaidens of theology and our love is of the wisdom from above, we shall be turned away instead of towards God. For the Christian, as St. Augustine states, all human activities must be done with God as their end and to His glory. Our philosophical speculation cannot lead to anything opposed to our theological knowledge, and it is divine revelation, not human science, that we must be certain of. The "story of a likeness" must be subservient to Divine writ. We may still study the nature of things, but we desire to see them finally in the light of the Triune God.

The necessary imperfection of the Demiurgus' forming due to the unreceptivity of the matter is also suggestive. We are, as Christians, called to become sons of God, to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, and to finally participate in His being. The Christian journey on earth is, however, often more marked by the weakness of the flesh than the triumph of the spirit. The imperfect state of our formation may suggest that at the moment we bear a greater resemblance to those things imperfectly formed by the Demiurgus than the new creation in Christ.

This journal is to serve as a forum for student thought on important matters in order to encourage, to whatever degree it can, the love of wisdom. Its name, as has been shown, indicates both that wisdom is to be loved wherever he is found and that our love for him is not yet perfect. *Demiurgus* is intended to include commentary and discussion of great books and thoughts along with poetry and short stories made by students. By using the written word, more nuanced, methodical, and polished reflections can be given. *Demiurgus* offers an opportunity for students to hone their writing ability and it then invites all to use the thoughts expressed in the common pursuit of truth. This journal's aim is to help us, as much as it can, to put on the mind of Christ and take every thought captive to Him who has freed us.

Why Would Wisdom Be a Woman?

Caleb Cohoe

The Proverbs of Solomon are given so that we, the readers, might "know wisdom and instruction."¹ This is accomplished not only by giving us wise advice and counsel, but also through personifying Wisdom herself. In chapter one and in chapters eight and nine, Lady Wisdom is seen crying out in the streets, before the city gates, offering instruction and understanding, of greater worth than gold. We learn that Wisdom was possessed by God "in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was."² Wisdom was with God as he created all things and now offers life to those who find her.³

The figure of Wisdom depicted in Proverbs seems to refer to the Second Person of the Trinity, the Word of God who is revealed in the New Testament. Here we find Jesus Christ described as the wisdom of God and as the Word which brought forth all things.⁴ The person of Wisdom depicted in Proverbs can then be seen as properly referring to Christ. This interpretation of the Wisdom passages in Proverbs has been the predominant one throughout the history of Christian theology. St. Augustine, for example, says that "though Wisdom was Himself our home, He made Himself also the way by which we should reach our home" and argues that the statements made about Wisdom in Proverbs must be referred to Christ.⁵ Yet if this figure refers to the man Christ Jesus, why is Wisdom shown as a woman in Proverbs?

Some help in resolving this difficulty can be found by a consideration of the *Symposium*, a Platonic dialogue. This dialogue can be an aid, not as an authoritative text or as the basis for Scriptural interpretation, but as a work giving a useful discussion of love and beauty which perhaps contains some part of that entirety of truth which, as St. Augustine says, belongs to God. Using the discussion, we shall see that Wisdom can be referred to as feminine, since it is what we desire and wish for, but that it is properly and fully masculine.

In the *Symposium*, the guests at this drinking party each give an account of love. Socrates, for his part, relates a discussion he had with a wise woman named Diotima about love and its connection with beauty. She defines love as "wanting to possess the good forever."⁶ It can be seen simply as a desire for happiness and, indeed, such a love does fit the definition at least to some degree.⁷ However, there are different kinds of love, both higher and lower. Diotima then suggests that the proper kind of love is to give birth in beauty.⁸ This ambiguous phrase is explicated to suggest both that we are pregnant with beauty (whether the physical kind, in which another human being is brought forth, or in soul, where we bring forth a great work, or great laws) and that we can only give birth in the presence of beauty.⁹ This account, with its description of both men and women as pregnant, suggests that beauty implants herself (or more appropriately, but less conventionally, himself) in us and this seed implanted in us allows us to love properly and seek after that beauty and wisdom which allow us to bring forth true virtue and possess the good forever.¹⁰ We seek after beauty, but only because we have already been impregnated and desire to bring forth offspring in the presence of that which is akin to what we have inside of us. Beauty is primarily masculine but has been seen as feminine since it is something we seek after once we are impregnated.

This account can be usefully applied to the figure of Wisdom in Scripture. We are to search for Wisdom, but we are only able to search for and love Wisdom because Christ himself has allowed us to be given the Holy Spirit. The picture of Wisdom in Proverbs is not wrong, but incomplete. Wisdom is personified as female since she is indeed something to be searched for, to be pursued and courted. This picture might, however, suggest that we reach Wisdom by our own power. Wisdom shouts to us, but it seems that we must act by turning and entering into her house if we are to receive instruction. She cries out in the streets, in front of the gates, but this cry reaches only those who turn and listen. Wisdom loves those who love her and will be found by those that seek her early, but she still needs us to decide to turn from folly towards her.¹¹ If we do find her we find life, while if we turn away from her we are condemned to folly and death.¹² It seems, then, that a choice is set before us.

Are we, however, able of our own inclination to turn from folly to Wisdom? An examination of the history of the Jews, God's chosen people and the hearers of the law, suggests that we do not have an inclination towards wisdom or goodness, but just the opposite. The judges judge without judging, the kings rule without ruling themselves, the priests offer only unacceptable sacrifices, and even Solomon himself, the author of Proverbs, seems to finally lack true wisdom. The Old Testament does, however, suggest an answer to this problem. In the books of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, God promises a new covenant in which his people will have his law, his Wisdom, in their hearts.¹³

This promise is fulfilled in the new covenant made by Jesus Christ. Through his death and resurrection we are cleansed and given the Spirit of life. Jesus says in the Gospel of St. John "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."¹⁴ He also states "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."¹⁵ We do not, then, simply choose to seek after Wisdom or to follow Christ, but instead he brings us to himself. Two additional passages from St. John make the point clear:

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.¹⁶

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.¹⁷

Salvation and true pursuit of wisdom come not out of our desire, but out of God's grace. It is because of Christ's death and resurrection that we are able to love God and believe in Him. He calls us inwardly, and we obey. As the First Epistle of St. John says: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."¹⁸ We, in our fallen state, have wills inclined to evil and our knowledge of the law leads only to condemnation, as the epistle to the Romans argues. We do not desire wisdom until He causes us to turn to Him and receive the spirit of life. We then become, as St. Paul says, a new creation, because we have been given the the spirit of adoption which makes us sons of God and joint-heirs with Christ.¹⁹ We love God and have him as our end, not because of our pursuit of Wisdom, but because of his pursuit of us. The picture given of Wisdom in the New Testament is of Christ as the bridegroom and the church as his bride. He is the beginning, middle, and end of our faith and love. As St. Paul says in his First Epistle to the Corinthians:

"What hast thou that thou didst not receive?"²⁰

The depiction of Wisdom in Proverbs must then be seen, along with the rest of the Old Testament, as needing the light of the New to be truly understood. The figure of Wisdom, like the law, convicts us of our folly and sin, but it does not immediately reveal how we are to be saved. The obedience of the law and hearkening to Wisdom may bring life, but the disobedience of the law and love of Dame Folly bring death and neither the law nor the figure of Wisdom show how a man dead in sin can be resurrected. It is not until Wisdom himself acts to free us that we can move towards him. Although Wisdom is seen as our end in both Proverbs and the New Testament, it is not until the Incarnation that Wisdom is clearly seen as the way to the end as well as the end itself. We ought, indeed, to pursue Wisdom and in finding her, we find life, but this is impossible without God acting on us, without Him giving us that Spirit which allows us to believe in and love him. It is only God himself who can bring us to himself and he has done this in the Incarnation through which all men, whether before or after Christ, are saved.

Endnotes

¹ Proverbs 1:2.

² Proverbs 8:22-23.

³ Proverbs 8:35.

⁴ e.g. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Colossians 1:13-2:3.

⁵ *De Doctrina Christiana*, I.11; *De Civitate Dei*, XVII.20.

⁶ *Symposium*, 206a.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 205a-b.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 206b.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 206d-e, 208c-209e; 206d, 209c, 212a.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 212a.

¹¹ Proverbs 1:21, 8:1-3; 8:17.

¹² Proverbs 1:23, 8:35-36; 1:24-33.

¹³ Ezekiel 11:19-20, Jeremiah 31:31-34

¹⁴ John 14:6.

¹⁵ John 12:32.

¹⁶ John 6:44.

¹⁷ John 10:27-30.

¹⁸ 1 John 4:10.

¹⁹ Galatians 6:15; Romans 8:14-17.

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 4:7.

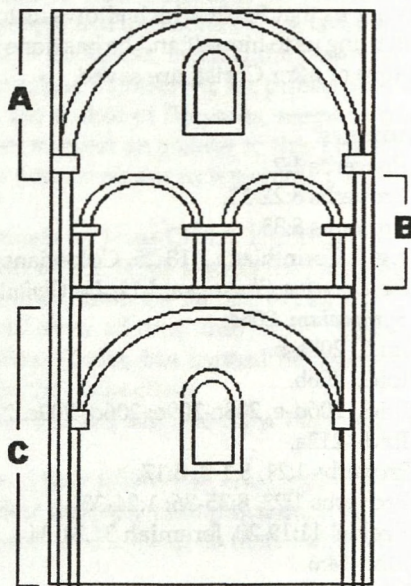
On Romanesque Stringcourses: An Essay

Roy Axel Coats

The austere nave of a typical Romanesque church betrays few decorative elements.¹ The clerestory towers above unadorned, pierced by small windows.² Beneath it is a tribune, possibly ornate, and simple blind arcades which add texture to the plain wall.³ It is supported by a nave arcade of plain columns, which occasionally are crowned with decorative capitals, as seen in La Madeleine in Vezelay. The starkness of the clerestory is reechoed by the barren walls of the side aisles. The somber bays of the nave stand in a row directing all attention towards the altar. Yet it is beautiful not in spite of, but because of, this simplicity. What truer and purer sense of architecture is there than when the very form of the building itself, and not an external facade, is the only real decoration? There is, however, one small but vital decorative element, the stringcourse, which is often added and complements perfectly the form, and thus the end, of the building. It is not a necessary element, but despite its delicacy it greatly heightens the effect of the church.

The basilica layout of the Romanesque style allows religious architecture to assume a new role.⁴ In Classical temples the attractiveness of the exterior is of the greatest importance, since the interior room, or cella, has no vital religious function.⁵ Classical architecture does not try to conquer spatial proportions to fulfill its end. In contrast to this style, which is primarily interested in the exterior, Christian architecture focuses on the interior. In ecclesiastical Romanesque, the attractiveness of the building is completely subordinated to the end of the building: the true worship of God. This activity takes place through the liturgy inside the church. Anything that might distract from this end is hidden, including the radiating chapels which are placed behind the chancel and walled off by a parclose.⁶ This worship reaches its climax in the Mass in which Christ comes bodily to His church. Thus the altar is the center of all attention; from it alone flows the mercy of God, and to it alone does man respond in praise and adulation. The apse over the altar symbolizes both the cave of Christ's nativity and the cave of his burial.⁷ The high altar itself mystically signifies both the sacrifice of Christ the Lamb of God and the tomb from which He rose on the third day.⁸

Fig. 1 - Typical Romanesque Bay



A: Clerestory B: Tribune
C: Nave Arcade, Side Aisle Behind

Given the basilica layout, the long nave draws attention forward to the altar. Such length, in addition to the relatively low ceilings, causes the lines of perspective to all tend towards one vanishing point, which is on a vertical axis with the midpoint of the altar. In elevation, the usually unbroken and harmonious colonnades of both the nave arcade and the tribune use all their decorative elements to further focus attention towards the altar. To emphasize this principle, the hemispherical nature of the apse draws the lines of the nave vaulting downwards upon the altar. Apart from a few magnificent exceptions, there is little other decoration. Romanesque architecture thus uses the form of the whole building in order to fulfill its end.

With this basic principle, what further decorative element can be used in order to increase the attractiveness of the building without hindering its function? The answer is the stringcourse. The stringcourse is a small band of usually floral or geometrical decoration that runs along the clerestory wall, usually somewhere between the tribune and the arcade. It is also sometimes found between the arches of the capitals of the pillars of the tribune, as seen in the ruins of Jumieges. When connected with a capital, stringcourses usually have a similar motif, thus creating a continuous line. They can range from simple narrow mouldings, as in San Vincente in Avila, to elaborate thicker bands, as seen in La Madeleine in Vezelay, but all tend to be restrained. They are found on both exterior and interior of the church. The stringcourse seems to have evolved from the corbels found under the ledge of the tribunes of earlier churches, such as St. Sernin in Toulouse, and also from the architrave of Classical architecture.⁹

In interiors, the stringcourse fulfills the end and complements the form of the building by acting like a line of perspective. It is a horizontal device that draws the attention forward towards the apse. This is particularly seen when the stringcourses connect the capitals of the pillars. The capitals create only a broken line of perspective, due to the empty wall space between them. The stringcourse connects this line and makes it definite and entire. Moreover, it is unassuming and does not detract attention from the apse. In summation, rather than distracting the worshiper it concentrates him on the focus of his devotion: the crucifix on the rood screen or the altar which is behind it. Thus it helps the entire building in fulfilling its end.

The exterior of a Romanesque church is often the converse of the interior. Here, stringcourses are used for decoration in a different way. Outside the sanctuary, they will not distract the worshipper. Rather, they are used to attract the worshipper. Stringcourses are used to decorate the otherwise bare exterior walls, especially around the apses, as is beautifully seen in San Vincente in Avila. They are also used with or instead of lessenes.¹⁰ In fact, most Romanesque sculpture is on the outside decorating the portals, as seen at Conques. Inside, usually only the rood screen, altar and other parts of the chancel are ornately decorated. These do not distract, but rather attract attention to the heart of the worship. In Romanesque, the principle that all aspects of architecture should focus attention to the seat of mercy is also manifested in its exterior decoration.

Romanesque architecture mastered every means possible to fulfill its end. It captured space and ordered it to the worship of the Holy Trinity. Romanesque churches rose up as beacons of the truth of Christianity in the chaos after the fall of the Roman Empire. They drew the parishioners by evoking godly fear and love. Once they were inside, the architecture,

aided by simple stringcourses, directed the parishoners' attention to Him from whom their salvation flows, the Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ.

Endnotes

¹ There are, however, some excellent examples of Romanesque fresco painting, as seen in the parish church of San Gimignano. These are predominately found in Italy, although Northern France has the glorious frescoes of St. Servin, with the entire barrel vault over the nave covered in stories from Genesis. Yet these seem to be the exception not the rule, especially outside Italy where Romanesque reached its purest forms.

² Notable Romanesque churches visited by the author include La Cathedrale in Bayeux, St. Michael's in Hildesheim, St. Vincent's in Avila, Fontenay, Le Madeleine in Vezelay, St. Anselmo in Tuscany, St. Sernin in Toulouse, Lund Domkyrkan, Gamla Uppsala Domkyrkan, Holy Trinity in Uppsala, Conques, St. Savin-sur- Gartampe, St. Remy in Reims, the Lower Basilica of St. Francis' in Assisi, Mont St. Michel, Varnheim Klosterkyrkan, the ruins of Cluny abbey church, the ruins of Jumieges outside Rouen, the Cathedral of Arles, and special Romanesque structures like the Cathedral of Pisa and the churches of Lucca.

³ These can be very ornate, as seen in the tribune over the Romanesque ambulatory of Toledo Cathedral.

⁴ This layout was by no means universal in Romanesque architecture. The central plan was used widely in France and Italy. In Germany, a layout with chancels on either end of the nave was developed. It is represented by St. Michael's in Hildesheim. This paper focuses on the Latin layout which is predominant, but the principles of Romanesque architecture also find expression in the other buildings.

⁵ Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* (Penguin Books, London, 1963), p. 1. In fact, temples were often used as treasuries and civil offices by the state.

⁶ It is recognized that from the 12th century onward some churches were built so that the laity would not have been able to see the altar due to the rood screen and parclose. A parclose is a wall filling in the space between the columns of the apse and separating the chancel from the ambulatory and side aisles. A rood screen, or jube, was an elaborately decorated screen between the chancel and the nave. The existence of such dividers does not prevent the building from drawing attention towards the altar, though hidden. They create the tomb of the unseen Incarnate God, from which the body of the living Christ is carried out to the expectant laity.

⁷ St. Germanus, *Ecclesiastical History and Mystical Contemplation*, 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁹ Corbels are projections that support an overhanging ledge. An architrave is the lowest part of the entablature, which runs across the capitals of the columns in Classical architecture.

¹⁰ A series of pilaster strips connected with a row of little raised arches called an arcade frieze.

Dependency and the Rational Animal

Daniel Pierson

Anyone who calls himself a Thomistic Aristotelian philosopher will define man as a rational animal. Alasdair MacIntyre calls himself a Thomistic Aristotelian, but he thinks that sometimes philosophers put too much emphasis on the rational part of man and not enough on the animal part. He thinks that if we study man's animality we will start to see him as dependent, and he argues, in the book *Dependent Rational Animals*, to human virtue through human dependency. His arguments, however, are meant more to raise questions about human dependency than to give real solutions. So, we are left wondering: how is man dependent and what virtues follow from that dependency?

That man is dependent, at least to some degree, is unequivocally true. He is dependent on others physically in society, because he cannot butcher his own meat or conduct surgery on himself. Also, there are times when a man is dependent on others for his very existence (as in childhood, old age, and disability.) Further, man is dependent in non-physical ways too. For example, he is psychologically dependent on the daily interaction he has with others. If a man was deprived of all contact with other persons, he would soon go mad. Finally, there is the most basic dependency, and that is our dependency on our parents. What these dependencies have in common is that they all allow for man to flourish (Mr. MacIntyre's word). Without them a man cannot possibly live a happy and flourishing life.

Yet is it better to think of dependency as only an accident, albeit an important one, to our flourishing? After all, we think that reason is more essential to man because of the well deserved pride we have in our accomplishments; things like space shuttles, Beethoven's symphonies, and Shakespeare's plays. Also, reason is what separates us from all other animals. On the other hand, it almost goes without saying that we have no pride in our dependence. We try to cover it up, and we make up diversions to forget about it. It certainly does not seem to make us different from the other animals or flourish *qua* human; most people, not only Nietzscheans, would say that man flourishes in spite of his dependency and because of his independence.

This, however, cannot be right; for man is never fully independent, and yet he often manages to flourish. In fact, dependence is the part of man that brings him into communities, gives him real social relationships, and gives him a place in the state; in short, it gives him the means to flourish. It is the modern political philosophers who, after ignoring human dependency, have problems explaining how children enter into the social contract. These philosophers cannot explain this, because they think the social contract comes only from reason. If, however, man *qua* dependent is entered into the social contract, then children, the infirm, and the disabled are also entered into the social order. They are now true members of society and not mere opportunities for benevolence. Aristotle recognized this when he wrote in the *Politics*, "He who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god."¹ A man is an individual with needs, and this is essential for his flourishing. With this in mind, we can say that man is dependent in a community *qua* existent human being; he can only flourish in a community where he is mutually

dependent on others. The only way for man ever to reach happiness on earth is through acknowledgement of these dependencies.

Most philosophers follow Aristotle in thinking man reaches this happiness by pulling himself away from vice. This view of the virtuous man thinks of him as alone or in a small community of friends, at best. If, however, we acknowledge our dependence and the virtues of acknowledged dependence, we shall strive for the flourishing of all. In this case, all of us are friends in respect to our common flourishing, whereas before all I had were a few "true friends." Before, the milk-man was only a "useful friend," and as such I only wished him to flourish as a milk-man, and only to flourish so that he would continue to deliver milk and not to flourish so much that he could over price the milk. On the other hand, with acknowledged dependence I recognize that I use the milk-man and he uses me, and then I recognize that my use is not using at all but dependence. To some extent I am at the mercy of the milk-man, insofar as he could stop delivering milk, but he is also at my mercy; I might stop paying him resulting in his loss of income. Because of this mutual dependency I have a moral duty to this other man, one over and above the duty I owe to him *qua* man. There is, therefore, a much stronger communal bond in our friendships when they are built on acknowledged dependence, for I must help other people flourish because they are dependent. Likewise, they owe me the same respect because I am at their mercy.

Now that the virtues of acknowledged dependence have been mentioned, they should be explained. Mr. MacIntyre uses the term to refer to a group of virtues including hospitality towards guests, Aquinas' *miserericordia*, giving graciously, and receiving graciously. To further show the necessity of these virtues for human flourishing, one of them, receiving graciously, will be elucidated.

The virtue of receiving graciously gives the completely dependent man an "empowering respect from others and self-respect." This virtue is necessary for two reasons. First, this virtue gives the dependent person a real place in the community and a stake in the flourishing of the community. Take, for example, a disabled person who is now equal to all others in a way that was not acknowledged before. If this virtue is recognized, we can do away with the crass idea that the disabled are "deformed" or "malformed" which brings with it the terrible notion that they do not fully participate in the human community. Secondly, in our current society we look at complete dependence with shame, and this is because our culture has never conceived of a dignified way to receive gifts essential to existence. If we can receive from others without being their moral inferiors or without being annoying in our acceptance, then receiving would not be shameful on the part of the dependent or patronizing on the part of the giver.

One last important point must be made. Mr. MacIntyre points out that Aristotle had a virtue that contradicts the virtue of acknowledged dependence. This is the virtue of the magnanimous man; about whom Aristotle says, "He seems to call to mind those to whom he has done good to, not those from whom he has received a good."² This text suggests that Aristotle's magnanimous man cannot accept the virtues of acknowledged dependence. This is an interesting problem that should be looked into fully, but I am inclined to think that Aristotle's magnanimous man will be found inferior to the man that is both gracious and magnanimous.

Hopefully, some of the right questions about human dependence have been raised. Underlying all this, is the fundamental question whether man flourishes individually or in a community. The Thomistic Aristotelian sees man able to flourish only when he is in a community. It is the Nietzschean who finds a communal spirit corrupting. So, ultimately, questions concerning human dependence come down to the question that Mr. MacIntyre has asked before: "Nietzsche or Aristotle?"

Endnotes

¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, I.2, 1253a27-29.

² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV.3, 1124b13-14.

Pierrot to Columbine

Anonymous

You left with my rival
Because you wanted to go dancing—
My melody at his arrival

Fell silent, then you left, not glancing
At my grief-stricken face—
No, you and he went prancing

Out the door, full of a wild grace
That I could never hope to match—
Skimming at a frantic pace

Through the woods, pausing to snatch
A kiss, then off once more—
You stop at last, that I may catch

Your shadows, dragging my lute, for
You cannot dance without my strain,
My heart-string's song that will soar

Over mountain and under plain.
Dance, O dance under the moon
And pay no regard to my pain;

Only hear my despair-filled tune
And know that these strings will break soon.

Aristotle, Wagner, and the Levin Problem in Modern Literature: A Sort of Symposium

Thomas Waldstein

Note: All the characters in this work, including the narrator, are entirely fictional.

I was going over the papers of my uncle, who had recently passed away, and finding it dull work enough, when I happened on a report of a "Brinkman's Symposium," which I remember my uncle taking me to. These symposia, as my uncle explained to me at great length, were started by a friend of my uncle's, named Brinkman, when they were both undergraduates. The first of them had been "a symposium on the *Symposium*." It was meant to be a one-off affair, but the participants liked it so well that they continued having them at irregular intervals for decades. The procedure was this: over glasses of some beverage which they took to be specially excellent my uncle and his friends would take turns giving speeches about some previously chosen book. Over the years all sorts of things came under discussion including *Alice in Wonderland* and *Printing Types: Their History and Use*. When I was at the university, I used to have to spend my vacations with my uncle, as I was dependent on him financially, and during one of these he brought me to a symposium. The subject was a newly published American book, and it provoked a discussion of literary form. My uncle and his "set" were singularly "out of touch" with the intellectual currents of their day, but in blissful ignorance of this fact they took themselves very seriously as intellectuals, and their conversation was always amusing on that account, but that symposium was particularly droll, both for the idiosyncrasy of the opinions expressed, and for the solemnity with which they were given and received. I was pleased, then, to find a report of that very symposium among my uncle's papers. In what follows, I give what I can remember of the literary discussion held at the end along with some of the speeches from the report.

The book that had been taken as subject was *The Violent Bear it Away* by Flannery O'Connor. The first three speeches were typical of my uncle's set—praising the work in extravagant terms. They praised its vigor, its realism, its "sacramentality," and its many other supposed virtues. My uncle was the fourth speaker to rise from his chair. After going on for an age at least in the same vein as the others, he gave some remarks that sparked the discussion which lasted for the rest of the evening: *Before I conclude, gentlemen, let me offer some remarks on the general development of the form of the novel which The Violent Bear it Away is so representative of. Aristotle (mistrust the speech that does not end by appealing to the ancients) once wrote that, as soon as tragedy and comedy appeared in the field, epic poetry and iambic verse were abandoned for these new forms because these new modes of art were "grander and of more esteem than the old."*¹ Is it not the case, gentlemen, that the novel has undergone a development similar to the one described by the philosopher? A development, that is, toward a more dramatic form. I think, gentlemen, that this dramatic character of the modern novel is very evident in Miss O'Connor's book. The narrative is a single whole; there is no commentary on it, no "next day," no "a while later," the author and the reader are never mentioned. Above all, it is concerned mainly with action. Aristotle wrote of tragedy, but it can be applied to drama in general, that it is an imitation of action rather than character.² Miss O'Connor's novel is almost entirely concerned with action. If one were to ask "what is it about?" the

answer would be "the Christening of the little boy," which is clearly an action. My uncle continued on for a while, and then took his chair. After he sat down there was an interlude without a speaker; it seemed that everyone who wanted to sing the praises of the novel had already done so. There was a man sitting next to me that had not seemed to take much notice of the speeches; he was reading a book during all of them. He presently arose and began to speak. The report calls him "Shaw," and from his accent he was evidently a Scotsman. I remember that he had a very large, red nose.

My dear Dawson, he began (my uncle's name was Dawson), as no one wants to give a speech of their own, I will attack you for yours. You say that we see a development in the English novel similar to the development in poetic forms of which the philosopher writes—I say, nonsense! Tragedy and comedy are not more refined versions of epic poetry and iambic verse—they are different kinds of poetry altogether. Whether, as he claims, their coming to almost replace epic and iamb was due to their being, what was it?—grander than the those, I am not convinced, but let that be—the fact is they were new poetic forms, not new versions of old ones. If tragedy was the dominant form in the Greece of Aristotle, the novel is the dominant form in modern England. (He said "England" with that peculiar note of sarcasm always employed by Scotsman when they invoke the name of their southerly neighbor). The philosopher wrote, with justice, that tragedy is an imitation of action rather than character, but our own thinkers (Trollope, for instance) have always held that with the novel the exact reverse is the case. The so-called development that you speak of, Dawson, is really just an instance of a problem that all art is infected with these days. Tolstoy, I think, was the first to analyze it. You remember that scene in Anna Karenina when Levin and that other bloke are talking about Wagnerian music at a concert?³ (He put special emphasis on the word "Wagnerian" and gave my uncle, who was notoriously devoted to Wagner, a sly look when he said it.) Well, Levin says that the problem with Wagner and his followers is that they bring music into the sphere of another art like the sculptor carving poetic phantasms in marble. This dashed "dramatic novel" thing that you praise so highly is a particularly irritating instance of this problem, I think. If you want drama, Dawson, go to the play, but why read a novel that tries to be a play? After this brief outburst, Mr. Shaw sat down.

I thank you, sir, for giving me an opportunity to talk about my favorite subject, my uncle said, with a hint of irritation behind his smiling tone, and took a long pull at his cigar. As much as I would like to, I do not think that it would be appropriate to turn this symposium into an argument on Wagner, but I will not resist saying just a few words. I think that it is true, up to a point, that different arts ought to imitate different realities, and I see Levin's point that when one art tries to do the job of another the result is sometimes poor (some of our 'abstract' painters illustrate the point). That this is not always a fault is shown by Tolstoy himself; I think that you would agree that some of his short stories are remarkably like painting. But whether you agree with that or not, surely you must see that writing a dramatic novel is not the same as carving poetic phantasms in marble. Sculpture and poetry are different arts, but, as you said yourself, the novel and the play are different forms of the same art—poetry. Aristotle says in the same work that I quoted before that the end is everywhere the chief thing and that the end for which we live is an action not a quality.⁴ I think that is why Aristotle seems to think that tragedy is the highest form of poetry, and I for one agree with him. There are six parts of the tragedy that Aristotle distinguishes: thought, melody, diction, spectacle, character, and, last and most importantly, plot. Plot is the end of tragedy and all the other parts are there only to serve it. It is obvious that what Aristotle wrote about is really Gesamtkunstwerk;⁵ all the arts brought into

play as servants of the highest art. That is what Wagner did, and that is why I have always contended that he was the greatest of artists and his operas are the greatest and the most real. No English poet has ever really approached that supreme master, but, as I said, Miss O'Connor's book is illustrative of a tendency in the modern novel in that direction.

Shaw looked as though he was about to get up and answer, but the chairman, Mr. Brinkman, who looked as though he was anxious to get to bed, rose hastily to bring the meeting to a close. I missed most of his remarks because Mr. Shaw was whispering in my ear an attack on my uncle's speech. According to Shaw, my uncle should go to the movies. "That's realism," I can still hear his hoarse whisper telling me, "that's *Gesamtkunstwerk*—a vulgar, boring, imbecile travesty of poetry." The report, however, does not omit Mr. Brinkman's concluding remarks and so I give them in full:

Gentlemen, it is late and regretfully it is time for me to bring this most pleasant evening to a close. I thank Fairclough, Mcmanaman, Fowler, and Dawson for their very interesting reflections on The Violent Bear it Away. I apologize to Dawson and Shaw for cutting off their controversy just as it seemed to be getting interesting. Perhaps one of these days we shall have a symposium on Aristotle's Poetics in which they can continue it. What you said about drama, Dawson, I found particularly intriguing. We always blame Shaw here for having an overly determinate view of the artistic form, but one could take what you have been saying to be an even more extreme example of that fault. You surely do not want all artists to produce only Wagnerian Operas? It seems evident to me that the arts are always developing toward a more determinate form, but it seems equally clear that they never reach absolute determinacy, but rather some great genius always comes along and takes them in a totally new direction. Anyway, the idea of drama will probably come up again already in our next symposium, which as you know is to be on Monsignor Guardini's book on the liturgy. Finally, I would like to thank Fairclough for this very fine port, and more especially for these truly excellent cigars. Whatever we may think of his other ideas, I think we can all agree that Tolstoy was profoundly mistaken when he said that one can derive as much pleasure from twiddling ones fingers as from smoking. Goodnight gentlemen.

Endnotes

¹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1449a; Bywater translation

² See: *Poetics*, 1450a.

³ Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, VII 5.

⁴ Aristotle, 1450a.

⁵ *Gesamtkunstwerk* is a name which Wagner invented to describe his operas. It is derived from *gesamt* which means whole or complete, and *Kunstwerk* which means art-work.

Future Contingent Propositions

Daniel Shields

Sometimes, though only when a matter of faith depends on it, the Church decides a philosophical question. When this happens, what was a philosophical tenet without which the faith was broken becomes in some sense a matter of faith; in all senses a Catholic is obligated to affirm such a tenet. In the 15th century, the Church decided such a philosophical question upon which depended prophetic doctrines. Aristotle's opinion concerning future contingent propositions was threatening to deprive doctrines, such as the future judgment of the world, of their claim to truth. The Church condemned his doctrine as heretical and thus obligated Catholics to believe that future contingent propositions are either true or false when they are spoken.

When the Church condemns a position which has philosophical arguments for it, it is necessary for the sake of those without faith that Christian philosophers demonstrate that the Church is correct. If this cannot be done, then it must be shown at least that the Church's position is not contrary to reason. We shall thus consider what Aristotle's position is and how he argues for it. Then, after considering the Church's condemnation of his position, we shall see how philosophical considerations show the Church to be correct.

In *On Interpretation*, Aristotle states that when a verb is added to a noun to form a proposition the speech always becomes either true or false.¹ In chapter 9 of that work, however, he pauses to consider the consequences of the claim he has made with respect to future contingent propositions, and decides to make an exception in their case. "Among, then, things present and past, it is necessary that the affirmation or the denial be true or false, ... But among things particular and future the case is not similar."² He argues his position by reductio, claiming that if future particular (or contingent, for all universals are necessary and eternal for Aristotle) propositions are either true or false at the time they were spoken, then all things would happen by necessity, and there would be no choice or chance or contingency. This is clearly false, for we debate about what to do in the future as if the result was still undetermined and changeable.

In more detail, his argument runs thus: granting that future contingent propositions are always either true or false, then "if a thing is white now, it was true to say before that 'it will be white,' so that it was always true to say of whatever is now happened that 'it is' or 'it will be.' But if it was always true to say that it is or will be, this thing is not such as to not be or not to be coming. And whatever is not such as to not become is unable to not happen, and whatever is unable to not happen, necessarily happens. That all future things do happen, then, is necessary. Nothing then happens fortuitously or will be from chance; for if it is from chance, it is not by necessity."³ This is, of course, absurd. Therefore, future contingent propositions are neither true nor false at the time they are spoken.

However, as Henry de Zomerer argued in the 15th century, if future particular or contingent propositions are not true at the time they are spoken, then none of the prophecies of the Bible were true and the doctrines of the Church which have to do with the future, such as that the Antichrist will come (which is both particular and contingent, for it depends on

the devil's evil will), are also not true now. A professor at Louvain by the name of Peter de Rivo tried to argue around this and maintain that Aristotle's position was not in conflict with the faith, but the issue came to the notice of the Pope. In 1474, Sixtus IV wrote in his Bull *Ad Christi Vicarii* "[These propositions]—...(4) That it does not suffice for the truth of a proposition concerning the future that the thing will be, but it is required that the thing will be unimpedibly; (5) also, That it is necessary to say one of two things, either that in articles of faith concerning the future there is not present and actual truth, or that the thing signified of them through the divine power is not able to be impeded;— are condemned as scandalous and deviating from the narrow way of the Catholic faith; they have been revoked by Peter himself in writing."⁴ Aristotle's position was thus declared as heretical and no Catholic is at liberty to hold it.

For the sake of enlightenment, however, it must be shown philosophically that Aristotle's argument fails. He claimed, as we have seen, that if it is true to say "this will be white", it cannot not happen. The justification for this would have to be that when an affirmation is true, it is necessary that the thing it refers to be, for that is what it means to be true. However, he can only think that this fact makes his argument follow by failing to distinguish between two different senses of "necessary." In one sense, a thing is necessary if it simply has to be, and there is no other way it could be. In another sense, a thing can be called necessary by connection: if A, then B. In such a case of conjunctive necessity, if the protasis, A, is simply necessary, then the apodosis, B, is simply necessary: if A must be, then B must be. If, however, the protasis is contingent, then the apodosis is also contingent: if A can be, then B can be.

If a future contingent proposition is true, then the thing will be; but since the thing will be contingently, the proposition is true now, but contingently. Thus there is no absolute necessity that a thing will be if a future contingent proposition is true when it is spoken. Aristotle, therefore, has no argument, and common sense, now unfettered, tells us that when we say "The Sox will win tomorrow", we are either right or wrong, not neither.

Neo-Aristotelians may have one last objection, however. If someone is reading now, then he cannot not be reading now; he did not have to read before he started and he may not be reading at any future time. However, he did decide to read and now it is unalterable that he did read and is reading at this precise moment. Similarly, if a future contingent proposition is true now, then it cannot not be true. Then, since the proposition's truth is absolutely necessary, then it is absolutely necessary that the thing happen. To claim this, nevertheless, is simply to misunderstand the difference between necessity and contingency, thinking that contingency is the same as potency.

If a thing presently is, it may be in one of two ways, either necessarily or contingently. You are thinking now, and you cannot not think, thus you are thinking necessarily. You are reading now, but you can easily not read this, thus you are reading contingently. You are thinking and you are reading actually, but one is necessary and the other is contingent. Otherwise there would be no difference between saying "it is" and "it must now be"; and one could not say that it "it can be" and that "it could have been," but only that "it could later be." A certain future contingent could be false now, but it happens to be true nevertheless. Since future contingent propositions are true or false contingently, the thing they refer to will or will not be contingently and not necessarily. Thus determinate truth in future things does not restrict freedom (nor does God's foreknowledge.) Hence reason falls on the side of the Church, not on the side of Aristotle.

Endnotes

¹ Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, 16b3.

² Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, 18a28, 33.

³ Ibid., 18b10.

⁴ Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 719. Notice that, although the latter condemned proposition refers to future contingent propositions of God's, the former one is universal and has no specific reference to divine utterances.

Woman

Darren Cools

Morning is a time for new chances;
 Evening a time for recollection,
 Woman —
 What is she?
 A gnawing hunger that slices open the soul
 Rushing to the warm lighted windows
 So inviting...
 Once there
 Ever fighting
 To flee the perceived strangling box
 Yet always cold and wandering outside.

A lovely flower; a clean fountain.
 Remain ever vulnerable
 For she is goodness,
 And she loves you with open and honest abandon
 The eternally broken heart...
 Receives its consolation.

Mercy

Daniel Shields

What a place we've come to,
 Far afield in the plain
 Of hurt and long lost dreams.
 Foreseeable, but no,
 We turned our faces away
 And rushed on, headlong.

So now we pay, with tears,
 With sighs; repenting late.
 But with remorse comes hope,
 Christ died so that we would not.
 Surely it's not too late?
 But if our tears are true,
 And only true will do,
 We will take what He gives,
 Mercy, the way he sees fit.